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AGENDA OF ACTION
MEDIA & GOOD GOVERNANCE
November 10-12, 1999, Laos

AGENDA OF ACTION

Twenty delegates representing media, government, academia, and non-governmental organizations from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, participated in the seminar on "Media & Good Governance" held on November 10-12, 1999 in Vientiane, Laos.

Mr. Bouabane Volakhoune, Lao Vice-Minister of Information & Culture formally opened the three-day event. He spoke of the Lao government's efforts to assist media fight corruption and other negative social phenomena. He said that "Lao media is step by step playing an important role in disseminating news and acting as the people's exchange tribune."

Also in attendance were three resource persons from Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand who discussed ways to create an environment for good governance, the role of civil society in good governance, and presented practical means whereby media can pursue good governance. Mr. Olof Milton, Charge d'Affairs of Sweden in Laos, also participated in the meeting and shared Sweden's experience in providing people and media wider access to information.

The three-day event was aimed at generating information on how media in the region have promoted good governance, highlighting opportunities and challenges in pursuing good governance issues, such as the rule of law, transparency, people's participation, accountability, responsiveness and efficiency in government affairs, among others.

Media practitioners from the region noted that the challenges they face include tight media control, unclear laws on media, limited access to information, insufficient cooperation between media and government, limited financial resources for media development, and poor professional skills.

On the third day of the seminar, the participants generated a set of agenda, highlighting recommendations on how media can promote good governance, and how government can assist media in the region pursue good governance.

I. MEDIA

a. Keep track of how law is being implemented and enforced, and report bad and illegal practices by government and the private sector to raise the level of people's awareness on these concerns.

b. Improve professional skills and should be more responsible in order to improve people's trust in media.

c. Serve as an effective intermediary between the government and the people by promoting free and fast flow of information. This calls for a more pro-active and aggressive media in seeking and reporting stories.

d. Create an environment for free and safe reporting as media practitioners can be exposed to threats from persons who wish them harm.

e. Provide journalists better equipment and training to improve reportage.

f. Aim for financial viability instead of waiting for more government subsidy. This calls for pro-active measures to improve product and marketing plans, source funds for operations and training programs.
g. Undertake constructive ways to bring people together to solve problems rather than create divisions among various sectors of the population.

h. Undertake more investigative journalism.

i. Promote respect for a code of ethics by taking steps to reduce media corruption.

j. Create and maintain media credibility by providing independent, quick, truthful and objective reporting. Media should not be a mouthpiece of any vested interest. They should pursue constructive criticism, particularly on issue involving education and development.

k. Report factually people's needs and expectations from government and exert more efforts to help ensure that people understand government policies.

II. GOVERNMENT

a. Set-up or improve its information network in every state organ by forming a group of information officers who will liaise with media men in providing information on government policies and activities.

b. Strengthen mechanisms for people to speak or express opinions concerning official activities.

c. Provide more financial support to media

d. Assist media to seek funds and revenues from other sources to meet operational and training requirements

e. Monitor and respond to media feedback on public complaints.

f. Minimize rules on media interference to ensure exercise of their professional work.

g. Provide priority to media in the use of public facilities to ensure exercise of their work, particularly during critical times.

h. Generate and/or improve training opportunities for media.

i. Provide media the widest possible access to information.
ADDITIONAL MATERIALS